

OPERATIONAL REVIEW COMMITTEE

22 March 2017

Present: Councillor R Kilmister (Chair)
Ms C Gwyther, Councillor P Harries, Mrs G Hayward, Councillor S Hudson, Councillor PJ Morgan, Mr AE Sangster and Councillor A Wilcox

(NPA Offices, Llanion Park, Pembroke Dock: 12.30pm – 2.15pm)

1. Apologies

An apology for absence was received from Councillor ML Evans.

2. Disclosures

There were no disclosures of interest.

3. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on the 7 December 2016 were presented for confirmation and signature.

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on 7 December 2016 be confirmed and signed.

4. Assessing the work of the National Park Warden Service

The report of the Head of Park Delivery began by explaining that the Warden service spent the majority of its work time on practical tasks, whether conservation and woodland work, property management of National Park Sites (including the land around Castell Henllys and Carew Castle) or (the majority of work) in managing access facilities: the Coast Path, definitive rights of way or permissive paths. While this did involve a good deal of landowner liaison and visitor contact, the main focus was on planning and carrying out practical work. The role was distinct from that of the Ranger whose main focus was on dealing with people – community liaison, working with schools, volunteers or to address recreation impacts, although they also carried out practical tasks. Both teams were complimentary and mutually dependant and it was essential that they worked very closely together.

The report went on to outline what the Wardens did, the team's resources and costs and how the work was evaluated and whether it could be done in a better way. In order to give the Committee a clearer picture of the work undertaken, the Head of Park Delivery introduced the three Area Warden Managers who outlined in more detail their work on the sites and inland paths, the coast path and the conservation work undertaken. The work was mostly pro-active with a programme of maintenance over the winter, which also tried to plan for potential future cliff falls. They stated that key to their success was their willingness to stop and talk to landowners, with whom they were able to build positive relationships, as well as visitors, and to explain what they were doing and why. They added that if any Members wanted to see for themselves the work carried



out, they could contact any of the Area Warden Managers who would be happy to arrange a visit.

Thanking the Area Warden Managers for their presentations, Members acknowledged that the Warden teams were held in high esteem by the local community for the work that was undertaken. Positive interaction with the farming community was very important and the use of Welsh speaking staff in this regard was highly valued. They were pleased that the percentage of paths that were open and available for use had risen to 86% and were interested to know how a decision was made as to which of the remaining paths were prioritised with regard to opening the remainder. Officers replied that resources were concentrated on paths that constituted an important link in creating a network of usable paths. With the exception of a few duplicate paths most routes were now open and the remaining paths that were considered a priority to open would require more negotiation and possibly legal action to remove obstructions.

Members also asked about further opportunities for grazing or using volunteers so that existing resources could be made to go further. Officer replied that as it was uneconomic to graze the coastal slopes, the Authority ran a project to encourage grazing of these areas. However around villages issues relating to the number of dog walkers meant that paths often had to be fenced which resulted in them not being grazed. With regard to volunteers, they were used, particularly to open up disused paths. However the need to supply and train them in the use of mechanical equipment meant their use was restricted.

The Chairman noted that the Head of Park Delivery would be retiring at the end of the month and, on behalf of Members, he wished him a happy retirement. The Chief Executive added that recruitment for an amended role had taken place and it was hoped that announcement of the post-holder would be made in the near future.

NOTED.

5. A review of the Interpretation work of Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority

It was reported that the Authority's interpretation work was undertaken by two Interpretation Officers on a job-share basis. One of the officers had written a short film, which had been made by John Worrall who managed the Authority's Tenby Visitor Centre, illustrating the range and breadth of the work undertaken and this was shown to the Committee. In it a variety of interpretation examples were demonstrated from traditional panels, signs and leaflets to a community art project at Carew and the Castell Henllys Barefoot Trail.

Thanking the officer for an interesting and informative presentation, Members asked about the level of partnership working with other organisations such as PLANED and Pembrokeshire County Council (PCC). She replied that the Authority worked with many different organisations, recently with PCC to create a series of short films for the Year of Legends. The work undertaken by the team always linked with the Visit Wales themes but some work was also



dependant on funding and other opportunities. The public appreciated interpretation, which aimed to make them feel welcome, however quantitative results were hard to measure.

NOTED.

6. Performance Report for the Period ending 31 January 2017

It was reported that the performance report had been modified to follow the structure of the Corporate Plan for 2016-17, which itself followed the approach of the Well-being of Future Generations Act with seven well-being objectives and an additional section providing general governance information.

The report presented the performance to 31 January, however some datasets related only to the first three quarters of the financial year i.e. April to December. The format had been amended to include where possible comparator data from the previous year and case studies to illustrate actions where appropriate.

It was noted that there had been an improved performance in the percentage of planning applications determined in 8 weeks ytd. However the main website had seen a decrease in website hits since last year, due in part to inflated user figures in 2015 following two major online campaigns. Also the ability of the Authority to achieve the target for the number of 'hard to reach' people engaging with the National Park ytd had been affected by the ending of project funding for Your Park in March 2016. However funding for a successor project 'Pathways' had now been obtained, so the target remained high.

Members welcomed the figures for planning performance, and while pleased that the numbers of affordable housing units approved ytd was 17, emphasised that there was still more to do in this area. They asked whether any of the reported safety incidents were of concern, and officers explained that the RIDDOR incident was something of a freak accident, adding that the above target number of days lost through sickness continued to be monitored, with some being due to non-work related health issues. Finally Members noted that their below target attendance at training events, while disappointing, would undoubtedly improve with the appointment of new Members following the forthcoming elections.

It was resolved that the Performance Report be **RECEIVED**.

7. Risk Register

The Chief Executive reported that the risk register had been reviewed by both the Management and Leadership Teams and recent progress and changes noted. Significant changes in risks were outlined in the report, and the full register appended for Members' consideration.

It was noted that the Report into the Review of Designated Landscapes had not been published on 15 March as the Minister had broken her arm and a copy would be circulated once it had been launched.



NOTED.

8. Overview of the recent Constable Exhibition at Oriel y Parc

The report before the Committee updated Members on the success of the 2016 Constable exhibition held at Oriel y Parc in conjunction with Tate and National Museum Wales, which saw an increase in numbers visiting the Gallery. The report also outlined other interpretation, events and activities linked to the exhibition including the Artists in residence programme.

A structured evaluation of the exhibition programme had been carried by Anne Millman Associates and an executive summary of this was appended to the report. A selection of comments from the Visitors Book and Trip Advisor were also included.

Officers added that one of the greatest benefits of the exhibition had been a blossoming relationship with the Tate Gallery and it was hoped that the relationship with them could be formalised to facilitate future exhibitions. This would also link in with the St Davids City of Culture bid, a report on which would be presented to the following week's meeting of the National Park Authority. Members were delighted with the success of the exhibition and hoped that works of similar calibre could be displayed in the near future.

NOTED.

9. Diagram outlining linkages between the Authority's plans

This document had been produced for Members' information to demonstrate how the Authority's plans fitted together. They thanked officers for the diagram and said that it was very helpful.

NOTED.

10. Review of the Terms of Reference of the Operational Review Committee

Members were reminded that a report had been presented to the meeting of the National Park Authority in February inviting them to comment on the current Committee Structure. Members had generally felt that the existing structure was fit for purpose, however it had been agreed that the Audit and Corporate Services and Operational Review Committees be given an opportunity to review their Terms of Reference and to make any recommendations for their amendment to the National Park Authority.

Members felt that as this was the final meeting of the Committee they would not make any changes.

It was **RESOLVED** that no amendment be made to the Terms of Reference of the Operational Review Committee.

11. Continuous Improvement Group: delegation of issues

It was **RESOLVED** that there were no issues that needed to be delegated to the Continuous Improvement group for consideration.

